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TAGS: MOPS PTER PROP I2 UK

SUBJECT: TWO EXPLOSIONS, TWO STORIES

CLASSIFIED BY: Louis L. Bono, Director, Basrah Regional Embassy Office, Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (a), (d)

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¶1. (S) Summary: On April 30, an F-16 bombed insurgents as they were preparing to fire rockets at a Coalition base in Basrah. The previous day, a vehicle transporting a munitions cache exploded in a Ja'ish al-Mehdi (JAM) neighborhood, killing several people. JAM blamed the incident on Sunni insurgents and reportedly executed four Sunni males in retaliation. End summary.

MND-SE FIRES BACK

¶2. (S) A USAF F-16 dropped a 500-pound bomb on an IDF team on April 30, as the team was preparing to attack the Basrah Air Station (BAS). According to MND-SE, an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) spotted a mobile rocket team around 1700 preparing to fire. MND-SE fired two 105mm artillery rounds, leading the rocket team to move to another firing point. At the second firing point, the team launched a few rockets before MND-SE fired one 105mm round, displacing the team to a third location. By the time the team had set up at the third firing point on the edge of the al-Qibla district, the F-16 arrived and dropped the bomb as the team was preparing to fire. MND-SE believes two members of the team died and three others were injured. One source reported the death of an Iraqi child, while others claimed that five civilians playing soccer in a nearby field were injured.

¶3. (S) This marks only the second time that MND-SE has authorized the use of a 500-pound bomb. On April 23, MND-SE authorized an F-18 to drop a 500-pound bomb on an unpopulated firing point after BAS received four IDF attacks in one hour. MND-SE doctrine prohibits the use of 500-pound bombs or the firing of 105mm artillery into urban areas.

JAM BLUNDER BLAMED ON SUNNIS

¶4. (C) In an unrelated incident, a large explosion occurred outside a cafe in the al-Hiyaniah district on April 29. Various reports claim five to ten people were killed and an estimated 25 injured. Indications are militants were transporting rockets and other munitions into this JAM stronghold when the explosion occurred. JAM claimed the explosion was caused by a vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) and blamed the attack on Sunni insurgents. To cover their blunder, JAM members apprehended four Sunni males from the nearby al-Zubayr village and brought them to the explosion site, where they were declared responsible and then executed. (Note: One unconfirmed report says the four men were

from Egypt, Syria, Afghanistan, and Sudan. End note.) MND-SE is patrolling al-Zubayr in order to prevent the violence from escalating.

COMMENT

15. (S) MND-SE's sudden inclination to fire back at IDF teams who attack BAS is slightly comforting to those of us at Basrah Palace who have endured daily IDF attacks for months. MNC-I has promised to provide MND-SE with precision-guided weapons in the coming weeks for counter-IDF operations, and we will urge MND-SE to fully exploit them. The incident in the al-Hiyaniyah district is a bit more troubling. If not diffused, the innuendo alone could re-incite sectarian violence in Basrah.

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